

MOBILITIES ON SCREEN: DELHI METRO IN BOLLYWOOD (2005-2017)

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ABSTRACT

Airlines, trains, buses, and metro – they have all appeared innumerable times throughout cinematic history worldwide, revealing fascinating insights about our perceptions of public transportation, mobility and the city. Bollywood, too, has shown urban transport; screen portrayals intrinsically linked to place and time. In 2002, Delhi, India, witnessed the advent of the Delhi Metro, forever changing the visualization of the city. The article focuses on Bollywood's cinematic imagination of the Delhi Metro space and traces its representation on the silver screen. How do these depictions reflect our evolving relationship with urban transit? What social, cultural and mobility experiences of Delhi residents and the metro commuters have they drawn on? Through an in-depth, critical analysis of this metamorphic technology's representations in select Bollywood films from 2005 to 2017, attention is drawn to the culture of mobilities and immobilities in the city depicted on-screen through the lens of the Delhi Metro.

KEYWORDS: Bollywood, Delhi Metro, Heterotopia & Urban Mobility

Received: Jun 12, 2021; **Accepted:** Jul 02, 2021; **Published:** Jul 16, 2020; **Paper Id.:** IJCMSDEC20212

INTRODUCTION

The first line of the Delhi Metro rail transit system from the Shahdara to the Tis Hazari station in New Delhi opened in 2002, altering the way the city experienced urban transit. Soon after, the imagination of this cosmopolitan metropolis in Bollywood films also changed. Earlier, filmmakers occupied Bollywood's cinematic world with images of India Gate, Qutub Minar, and Connaught Place as referents for the capital city in its narratives. In November 2003, *Bewafaa* (Kapoor & Darshan, 2005) became the first feature film released, with a scene shot inside the Delhi Metro. Soon after, there were more requests to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (hereafter, DMRC) for shooting film scenes in the Delhi Metro and its stations. In this exploratory paper, I have drawn on the existing body of research on the Delhi Metro and closely analyzed the filmic narratives from select Bollywood films highlighting the Delhi Metro as a recurrent motif of modernity and mobility. The article examines the evolving relationship between Bollywood's representation of the Delhi Metro and the everyday lived experiences of the city's residents.

Bollywood has been a contested term, employed by various people differently (Prasad, 2003; Punathambekar, 2016; Rajadhyaksha, 2003). Scholars such as Ashis Nandy, Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Ravi Vasudevan, Madhav Prasad and Rosie Thomas have explored numerous narratives around Bollywood (Desai & Dudrah, 2008). From its emergence in the 1990s, the process of the term's naturalization has been a gradual one within the Indian cultural context. Prasad notes, "It is tempting to think that this process of near-universal legitimation of 'Bollywood' is a symptom of some other social and cultural processes which have a wider

significance” (Prasad, 2008, p. 41). Within the context of this article, it refers to the globalized, mainstream, commercial Hindi cinema based out of Mumbai, India (formerly Bombay).

Post-2005, most Bollywood films with Delhi as a part of their narrative have at least one exterior or an interior shot of the Delhi Metro. One of the shots that have significantly gained popularity in Bollywood’s imagination of the city is the Delhi Metro crossing the Hanuman Mandir statue in central Delhi. The Executive Director of Corporate Communications for the DMRC, Anuj Dayal, has called the Metro “the quintessential symbol of a New Delhi” (in an interview with Goswami, 2016). He states how directors who didn’t manage to shoot inside the Delhi Metro for their films; shot it from adjacent buildings. After *Bewafaa*, other films with scenes shot inside the Delhi Metro stations and coaches include *Black and White* (Farooqui, Ghai, Puri & Ghai, 2008), *Dev D* (UTV Motion Pictures, Bindass & Kashyap, 2009), *Delhi-6* (Mehra, Screwvala & Mehra, 2009), *Love Aaj Kal* (Khan, Vijan & Ali, 2009), *Paa* (ABCL, Reliance Entertainment & Balki, 2009), *Jannat-2* (Bhatt & Deshmukh, 2012), *PK* (Chopra & Hirani, 2014), *Fitoor* (Kapoor, Kapur & Kapoor, 2016), and *Mom* (Kapoor et al & Udyawar, 2017). These particular films have been selected for this study as they have critical scenes shot inside the Delhi Metro, which are integral to the narrative structure of their respective films. A close examination interweaves narrative structure, semiotic, contextual and mise-en-scene analysis as a methodological approach to examine the depiction of mobility cultures in these Delhi Metro scenes. The study looks at the Delhi Metro’s role in the film’s larger narrative and how it contributes to character development.

THE MANY MODES OF DELHI METRO

Numerous studies focus on mobilities (Cresswell, 2012; Sheller & Urry, 2016), its relation to rail transport (Schrag, 2006; Siemiatycki, 2006; Symes, 2007), and Delhi Metro in particular (Butcher, 2011; Sadana, 2010). Butcher’s qualitative study looks at the urban mobility of a diverse group of young people using the Delhi Metro. It highlights “the contestations in cosmopolitanism: its use to describe a desired urban imagination and its deployment to manage change, unfamiliarity and inequality” (p. 237). Cinema has always been engaged with the idea of travel and mobility since its inception. In *Tracking Modernity India’s Railway and the Culture of Mobility*, Aguiar (2011) describes Hindi action films such as *Sholay*, *Coolie*, and *The Burning Train*. She discusses how in some instances, they construct disaffected masculinity by employing visuals of railway mobility. In others, they attempt to visualize national subjectivity alternately. Conversely, melodrama provides insights into more complex relations between the post-colonial nation, mobility, and femininity, appearing in films like *Pakeezah* and *27 Down*; and the film industry’s interest in romance on trains.

Gendered Mobility

The paper draws on Foucault’s concept of heterotopia, which offers a way to think about spaces differently. A heterotopia is a world within a world that mirrors the outside world while at the same time offering possibilities to distort or invert it. For example, he observes, “a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by” (1984, p. 271).ⁱ The metro provides a constructive avenue for studying gendered, everyday mobility. As a public space where commuters travel in close proximity, it creates opportunities to explore women’s and men’s mobility.

The film *Bewafaa* is a romantic musical drama about people’s cultural values and moral dilemmas (Kapoor &

Darshan, 2005). It was the first Bollywood film to be shot inside a metro station. Hence, on-screen time is spent familiarizing the viewer with the Delhi Metro architecture and how it is negotiated as a public space. The Delhi Metro scene in *Bewafaa* (2005) opens with an image of the Kashmere Gate metro station entry. The principal character in this scene is Anjali (Kareena Kapoor), who encounters her husband Aditya (Anil Kapoor) and her former lover Raja (Akshay Kumar) in this Delhi Metro space. Other secondary characters present in the scene are Aditya's friends Dil (Manoj Bajpayee) and Pallavi (Shamita Shetty). Anjali is seen walking up to the ticket counter inside a station and purchasing a ticket to the Shahdara Metro Station. Her voice is heard over the moving images of her traversing the metro premises. Shiny new escalators carry people towards the metro platforms. She punches in her metro card and walks towards the platform. Her voice-over informs the viewer that it is Republic Day with a lot of traffic on the roads. She has made clandestine plans to meet Raja at the Shahdara Metro station; and expects that both will remain anonymous in the metro crowd. She says, "No one will recognize us there." Sadana (2012) refers to the "anonymity created by this type of mass transit", which connects different people with diverse backgrounds travelling from other parts of the city.

Anjali anxiously boards the slightly crowded train where the other commuters can be heard singing "*Saare jahaan se achcha*" ("The best in the world") enthusiastically. These interior visuals have been juxtaposed with the exterior visuals of a fast-moving train exiting the Kashmere Gate station. Anjali is in the foreground, with a blurry background full of Indian flags waved by other commuters. A male figure in a sharp, dark suit steadily approaches Anjali as she leans on a rod. Aditya lays his hand on her shoulder, and Anjali turns towards him, startled. She stammers on seeing him as he confidently smiles at her. A conversation ensues where he expresses his surprise at finding both of them in "Delhi's Subway." He chats about India's globalization and the metro being the talk of the town. This visual is followed by an exterior shot of the metro on the elevated tracks.

The metro in the film is shown crowded with people singing patriotic songs, joined in by Aditya's friends Dil and Pallavi. They approach Aditya and Anjali, and a conversation ensues. Dil commends the Indian government for taking the initiative to build the Delhi Metro, saying, "Now we are as good as other countries. Progressing further..." The camera tracks down from a shot of the Shahdara Metro Station digital board to a waiting Raja at the platform. The metro rolls into the station and halts, and the small group steps out together. Dil's voice is heard narrating his previous experience in London's subway and his pleasant surprise at having a similar one in Delhi. Raja tries to approach Anjali, unaware that she is a part of this group. She holds onto Aditya's arm while the group continues talking about the well-built train and stations. Dil says, "A train is akin to a husband, and a station is like a wife." Raja witnesses this conversation and withdraws surreptitiously. As they are about to leave the platform, Dil turns and spots Raja. He walks towards him, praising him effervescently as an incredible musician. He introduces the rest of the group to Raja and then invites him for lunch. Raja politely refuses, explaining that he is expecting someone at the station. Aditya returns to Raj and apologizes to him for his friend Dil's slightly crazed fan-like behaviour. The group turns away, and the scene ends with fast-moving shots of the Delhi Metro, with Dil's off-key singing, "*Gaddi jaati hai chalanga maar di, maine yaad aaye mere yaar di.*" ("As the vehicle moves, I long to see my beloved.")

These screen depictions of the Delhi Metro provide invaluable insight into our attitude towards cities in general and public transportation. Siemiatycki (2006) explicates the notion of a 'modern' city, threaded with the ideas of

globalization, mobility, and development. As the city of Delhi attempts to become a modern city, the emphasis is on showing gleaming, clean urban transit, a symbol of globalization.

The Delhi Metro scene from *Mom* was shot in March 2016 at the Rajiv Chowk Metro station (as mentioned in Lal, 2018). The principal character in the background is Devki (Sridevi), strongly supported by DK (Nawazudin Siddiqui). It opens with an early morning aerial shot of the Delhi Metro zipping on its tracks, with the metro station in the background. Devki is seen looking around in a relatively crowded underground metro platform. A woman's voice-over informs us that she is at the Rajiv Chowk Metro station. She stands in front of an open metro train but doesn't enter it—the train leaves. The camera tilts down from a close shot of the analogue platform clock to Devki, telling the viewer that it is 1:08 pm. We infer from the situation that she is waiting for someone inconspicuously.

A person stands close behind her, reading an English newspaper. As he lowers it, the viewer can see it is the detective DK (Nawazudin Siddiqui). He shares information with her about Baburam (a negative character in Devki's daughter's assault). On Monday nights, he goes to a bar and drinks there till it closes for the night. DK confesses his confusion of whether he is doing right or wrong by helping Devki. She replies that he is wrong, but what she considers worse is doing 'nothing'. She questions him about his choice between 'wrong' and 'very wrong.' He messages her the bar's address. She asks him again whether the information is correct. He walks away, saying that she should trust Lord Shiva and 'he' will take care of everything. Devki replies that god can't be everywhere. As DK enters the metro train, he turns towards her and says, that's why god created mothers. The door closes, and we see Devki through the window as she looks at DK.

The metro in this scene again emerges as a stage that affords and even encourages anonymity, yet at the same time forges new identities. There is another exterior shot of the metro crossing the elevated tracks, with colossal glass and steel buildings in the background. This image plays out just before the police inspector (Akshaye Khanna) visits Devki's husband, Anand (Adnan Siddiqui). This beginning shot establishes a concrete skyline – a corporate culture that Anand inhabits. It effectively frames the ensuing conversation in his office between Anand, a 'decent' upper-middle-class family person and a police inspector.

In *Delhi-6*, Delhi Metro is a symbol of freedom and opportunity. In all the metro scenes shot in June 2008, the principal character is Bittu (Sonam Kapoor), who lives in Delhi-6 with her family. As we witness Bittu's Delhi metro commutes, we see her attempting to realise her dreams of auditioning for a television show, Indian Idol. She takes the metro to move away from her family and immediate neighbourhood and travel towards the inner city. The metro first appears in the song "Delhi-6" in the film. Bittu enters a metro subway station wearing a yellow suit with a flowing dupatta and a single plait down her back. She changes to a halter and low waist skirt inside the metro washroom, wearing big hoops in her ears, bright red lipstick, chunky metallic jewellery and a headband, her unruly, curly locks flowing behind her. She heads towards a photographer's studio for a high-spirited photoshoot, intent on creating a portfolio for the television show. In the song "Masakalli," we see her in the metro wearing a pink suit with a white dupatta, listening to music on her earphones. She bursts into a song and calms down once she realizes that she is drawing attention to herself from her fellow commuters. She emerges on the escalators in the Connaught Place metro station with a change of clothes – a spaghetti top with a skirt. Wearing headphones, she hums with abandon with the music. She dances happily

on the metro platform, listening to music on her earphones again.

Another metro scene shows a pensive, teary-eyed Bittu, wearing a yellow suit and travelling inside a slightly crowded metro. She is then seen with a renewed sense of purpose as she floats up an escalator in Connaught Place for her Indian Idol audition. Thus, the metro allows her to move between different socio-cultural spaces while keeping her connected with her family. Similarly, Sadana (2010) also refers to how the film offers a narrative of “gendered liberation.” In both *Mom* and *Delhi-6*, it is interesting to note how gender intersects with other axes of identity like age, social class, marital status, and economic background for Devki and Bittu, the two women characters. These women assert their agency through their automobility.

The only other metro scene in the film *Delhi-6* that doesn’t portray Bittu; is part of the “Kaala Bandar” song. The scene begins with a camera moving over a crowded metro platform. It ends on a close-up of a screen in the metro station with the news of the Black Monkey (Kaala Bandar) playing out. Metro travellers avidly watch the news on overcrowded station platforms. This news story that forms a part of the film’s narrative refers to the mass hysteria around the “monkey-man” in mid-2001 in India. It reveals how diverse people negotiate public spaces in our social-cultural milieu with bodies densely packed together in crowded metro stations.

Theatre for Adventure and Banality

Subhash Ghai’s *Black and White* is a crime thriller that follows Numair Qazi (Anurag Sinha), an Afghan *fidayeen* (suicide bomber) who comes to India with a terror mission to be executed on Independence Day. To achieve his aim, he develops a close relationship with Professor Mathur (Anil Kapoor) and his family, which comprises his wife, Roma Mathur, and a young daughter, all residents of Chandni Chowk. *Black and White* is the second Bollywood film release with scenes shot in November 2006 inside the Delhi Metro. The introduction to the city of Delhi in the film starts with India Gate and vicinity shots of the Parliament. We then see visuals of Chandni Chowk, followed by an image of the Delhi Metro crossing the Hanuman Mandir. We next come to an interior shot of the Delhi metro station. The metro enters an elevated station and draws to a halt. A close shot of two pairs of feet striding purposefully across the metro platform announces the arrival of the film’s principal character, Numair Qazi in Delhi.

This visual is followed by a close shot of his face which reveals him standing in front of an open metro train, looking left and right. The camera pulls out, and the door closes behind him. A short man enters the frame, greets him and then asks for his religion, assumed name and parents’ name. He confidently answers him back, appearing self-assured and calm. The shorter man leaves and returns with another man dressed in white, Indian ethnic clothes – a kurta and pyjama. The metro leaves behind Numair as the two men draw closer to him. The shorter one takes his bag from him as the three of them turn in a wide shot with their backs to the camera and walk away. The scene ends with a long shot of the interior of the metro station. There are empty metro tracks on the left of the frame, while the right of the frame has the metro platform with the three men walking away towards bright daylight at the end of the platform. In the foreground, there is an analogue clock and a yellow station board.

The next metro scene in the film begins with an aerial shot of the Delhi Metro moving on elevated tracks. A group of five men (including Numair) converse about their plan getting jeopardised by the death of a close associate. A

covert meeting occurs within the moving Delhi Metro coach, which appears to afford them anonymity. The metro enters an underground station, and the scene ends.

The third Delhi Metro scene in the film opens in a room where a man monitors security arrangements through CCTV. A close up of a screen monitor shows CCTV footage of various spaces in and around the Red Fort. People move in and out of the metro station using the staircase, followed by a visual of people going through the security check at the station entrance. The male voice-over running in the background confirms that the significant security arrangements in place at metro stations are for Independence Day, over shots of gun-toting security personnel standing on metro platforms.

All the scenes from the film allude to a sense of adventure that the Delhi Metro engenders as an urban, public space that witnesses constant movement. The first scene foreshadows the ‘mission’ that Numair is embarking on. The second metro scene moves the narrative forward by offering the group of men inconspicuousness and placelessness – marking it ‘safe’ as it doesn’t have a fixed geographical location. The third scene offers the visual narrative that most real-life metro commuters were gradually getting familiar with – of constant surveillance and security that form an integral part of the Delhi Metro rail transit system.

In reel and real life, the Delhi Metro surfaces as a theatre of the ordinary – a setting where the actors are more likely to play out their inner struggles silently. This silent tension between the public display and interior life has been articulated quite effectively in the film *Dev D*. Here, the Delhi Metro serves as a background for the psychological landscape of the titular character Dev (Abhay Deol). It makes several brief appearances in the film. The first Metro scene (shot in April 2008) opens with a transition from a title card saying Dev D to a quicksilver image of a metro train inside the metro station. Music fades in over visuals of Dev sitting morosely inside the Metro. His co-passenger avidly stares as he looks in the other direction indifferently in an almost empty train. The next metro scene is a conversation between Dev and a brothel-keeper in a metro station corridor. Off-screen, we can hear the sound of the Delhi Metro. There is also a single, continuous shot in the moving Metro, where Dev stumbles and bumps into a person inside the coach. This scene is a part of the more extensive film sequence where jealousy-ridden Dev spies on his ex-girlfriend Paro with her new husband. Sadana (2010) describes his presence on the Metro as symbolizing “the possibility of adventure, unpredictability, and even danger.” Troubled and lost, he is adrift in a dark city’s urban transportation network. The metro in this filmic context is a part of a much larger culture of mobility.

Over the years, the media has frequently reported about the metro scenes in Bollywood films; and when, how and where these scenes were shot. One such news report discussed the shooting of *Paa* in May 2009. The film is about a father-son relationship, where the son is afflicted with a rare genetic condition called progeria. The metro sequence was shot in four hours during the day in a moving metro, which made a round-trip from Sector 9 Dwarka station to the Yamuna Bank station (“Film shooting in metro train”, 2009).

The principal characters in this scene are Amol Arte (Abhishek Bachchan) and his 12-year-old son Auro (Amitabh Bachchan), with his mother Vidya (Vidya Balan) making a brief appearance. The scene opens inside a moving metro train, where they are sitting across from each other. Sadana’s (2012) comments on how the Metro can at times feel like a stage - “in the confines of the trains... conversations are overheard, gestures seen, bodies felt.” The foreground is

empty, while some people can be seen sitting in the background. The outside is brightly lit with dark metro interiors. The train moves out of the station, and the interiors of the train gradually turn bright. Two girls exchange smiles as they recognise Amol as a Member of Parliament. Amol is visibly conscious about travelling alone with Auro. They have a stilted conversation about travelling without bodyguards. The conversation is laced with innuendoes, and the viewers can read in between the lines how Auro is constantly alluding to his mother Vidya (Vidya Balan). He attempts to joke about the bodyguard, or rather the lack thereof, eventually relenting and telling Amol about the bodyguards sitting at a distance in the adjacent coach. He declares that he will not let Amol die, on the verge of confessing that Amol is his father. He is interrupted by his mother's voice in his head. He continues that he wouldn't let him die, as Amol is his MP. The situation eases when Auro makes a funny confession and Amol bursts out laughing. We see Vidya (a figment of his imagination at this point in the narrative) whispering into Auro's ears. The song "Hichki" (Hiccup) begins as the metro coach empties. Auro gets up from his seat and starts dancing inside the Metro, as two bodyguards later join him. The Metro is completely deserted when he goes back to Amol, asking him to join him. The scene ends with Amol and Auro breaking into a dance and then taking their respective seats.

The Delhi metro scene in *Love Aajkal* was shot in October 2008. The film's principal characters are Jai (Saif Ali Khan) & Meera (Deepika Padukone). At this point in the narrative, both of them are in relationships with other people. The metro scene is the first time they are meeting after their breakup, and they are happy with the reunion. The scene opens with both of them walking down a metro station staircase and entering the coach. They sit close to each other. Jai is surprised by Meera's discomfort with their proximity. He shifts away and then returns to put his arm around her shoulders. This scene unfolds in close shots, and it visually appears that the two of them are in a world of their own. Meera points out that 'others' might misunderstand their relationship, but Jai retorts that there are no 'others' to see them. Eventually, Meera relaxes and puts her head on his shoulder. They end up making plans to meet secretly for the next three days and explore 'Dilli' (Delhi) together. As Meera pulls Jai up and drags him out of the metro coach, we realize that there are other people in the background, all engrossed in their conversations. As we can infer from these scenes, the metro becomes a stage where personal relationships are performed and renegotiated. A conversation is witnessed, and another alluded to in the context of the filmic narrative.

In the crime thriller film *Jannat-2*, there is a scene at the Airport Express line metro station with the principal characters, a small-time arms supplier Sonu Dilli (Emraan Hashmi) and his wife Dr. Jhanvi (Esha Gupta). The scene begins with an optimistic Sonu coming down an escalator while hugging his wife closely and chatting about their plan to go to Digha for their honeymoon. Jhanvi's phone rings, and the caller ACP Pratap Raghuvanshi (Randeep Hooda), asks for Sonu. He begins his conversation with Sonu by saying, 'the metro is a convenient way to travel.' Sonu realizes that the ACP is close by and is forced to meet him. They have a short, tense dialogue where the ACP threatens and then cajoles Sonu into abandoning his honeymoon trip. Sonu returns to Jhanvi, waiting on the metro platform near the coach. As she attempts to enter the coach on seeing Sonu, he pulls her back. The ACP spies on the couple from behind a pillar. In a long shot, we see Sonu and Jhanvi talking. Jhanvi appears disappointed by the change in plans and turns back to leave, and Sonu follows dejectedly after her. The scene ends with a close up of the ACP near the pillar, who looks perturbed but resolute. Sonu's mobility is curtailed. Here, the metro is a place for brief encounters that change the characters' lives. It

signifies an opportunity missed and a desire denied.

The Delhi Metro scene in *PK* opens with the introduction to the city of New Delhi with a fast-moving shot of the metro tracks, followed by the iconic image of the metro whizzing past the Hanuman temple. The principal characters in this scene are PK (Aamir Khan) and Jaggu (Anushka Sharma). Jaggu's voice-over reveals that her family has not accepted her on her return to India. She subsequently starts working as a news reporter for a television channel. In this scene, we see her travelling in the Metro with a colleague. There is a brief satirical reference to how news channels in India operate - "Some days we had the news, and some days we fabricated it." The metro enters an elevated station where Jaggu spots PK standing on the platform wearing a bright yellow helmet, chewing paan, a transistor strapped across his body, holding a black briefcase in one hand and yellow-coloured pamphlets in the other. She watches him intrigued as he enters the metro coach and hands over the leaflet to Jaggu and her colleague. They read "Missing" and have photographs of Hindu gods printed on them. PK energetically distributes them to everyone in the coach. Intrigued, Jaggu follows him out of the metro coach to the platform. She sits on the adjacent seat and initiates a conversation with him. He replies in Bhojpuri when Jaggu asks him about his activities. He complains that "God" has his case pending for some time and is "not responding" to him. Jaggu asks him about his yellow helmet, and he answers that he wears it so that God can spot him easily in a crowd. The following metro arrives, and PK gets up to distribute pamphlets inside the metro coach again. The scene's subtext refers to the many socio-cultural practices prevalent in Indian society from an outsider's perspective.

Another scene from the film shot inside the Metro is the song "Love is a waste of time". The scene begins with a couple chatting on the Delhi Metro. The camera pans to PK, who is looking at Jaggu's photograph. He imagines frolicking inside a deserted metro with her. They run around the poles, reminiscent of how old-time Bollywood actors ran around the trees (or in a train) in a romantic song. The scene returns to PK jumping on a slightly overweight man's lap in a crowded metro. Others in the coach watch him amusedly, and the women snicker softly. Thus, the metro again becomes a stage where we see characters playing out their fantasies, similar to how many everyday commuters do. A similar dream plays out in a song sequence, "*Jogi Aaya*", from the film *Black and White*. A female character develops feelings for Numair in the film and fantasizes about the two sitting close together in a deserted, moving metro.

The only film to be shot inside the Delhi Metro in 2015 was *Fitoor*. The metro scene in the film opens with Noor (Aditya Roy Chopra), Firdaus (Katrina Kaif) and Firdaus' brother Arif walking down the escalators. Arif complains about not being allowed to drive back from the party they have just attended. Katrina rebukes him, saying that he shouldn't drink (and then insist on driving) when he cannot handle himself well afterwards. The viewer infers that this is why they take the metro and behave as responsible individuals in society. All three characters board a deserted metro train. Noor stands close to Firdaus, who gently pushes him away, saying that she is about to get engaged. She tells him about her to-be fiancé Bilal whose father was a minister in Pakistan's government, and now Bilal is next in line. She asks Noor if he fears anything. He replies that he's only afraid of losing her again. He adds that he will not give her up and will fight for her. He makes references to Pakistan losing the Indo-Pak wars in 1965, 1971 and 1999. He asks whether Bilal has gotten an Indian visa. Both Firdaus and Arif chuckle in response, with Arif murmuring "idiot" softly. The scene ends with Noor and Firdaus exchanging glances.

Most of the Delhi Metro scenes have been around romantic encounters without any trace of violence. Dayal

states about DMRC preference for shooting romantic settings on the Delhi Metro rather than action scenes. He explains the precautions taken to avoid disturbance to regular metro operations and threats to safety and security. The disinclination towards scripts with any reference to terrorism has been explicitly expressed (as mentioned in Goswami, 2016). From 2015 onwards, news media have reported Delhi Metro's stringent standards in granting permissions for feature film shoots (Lal, 2017). A case in point is the metro scene from *PK* (Hirani, Chopra & Hirani, 2014). The scene described above was shot in Gurgaon's Rapid Metro as it was a long one. There is an increasing trend of shooting in the Rapid Metro and Mumbai Metro.ⁱⁱ Also, the metro usage has progressively changed from shooting to promotion by filmmakers and actors. It is an effective strategy to initiate direct interaction with a sizeable group of people instantaneously.

CONCLUSIONS

The article examines the cinematic representation of the Delhi Metro in select Bollywood films, calling attention to the various ways in which the space and the iconography of the metro station have been employed in the films. The metro station emerges as a physical space and symbol or metaphor for social and cultural encounters of various kinds. It is a site where the characters' subjectivities, gender, and agency come together to draw attention to the Delhi Metro's association with galvanic modernity, public and private space, adventure and banality. The many moods and modes of the Delhi Metro depicted in these films highlight urban gendered, modernity and mobility. Delhi's metro rail system has emerged as a symbol of middle-class modernity. While it reflects class-based social inequalities, its aspirational Bollywood imaginary mainly portrays privilege and upward mobility. These filmic narratives are an essential source for understanding the Delhi Metro with its processes of inspiration and production and encouraging reflection on our everyday conditions of life. Investigating the complex place that the Delhi Metro occupies in the Bollywood imaginary encourages us to make connections between the daily, lived experiences of the people and their representations on the silver screen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An earlier version of the paper was presented at the International Conference on Indian Cinema and Alternate Networks – ICAN 2 held in 2018.

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Notes

ⁱ As quoted in *Different Spaces* in Michel Foucault's *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology* (1998). Edited by James D Faubion. Translated by Robert Hurley and others. *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*. New York: The New Press

ⁱⁱ The Mumbai Metro started its operations in June 2014.